

# WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT BRITISH LABOR?

*By* DAVID SHUB *and*  
ROBERT ALEXANDER  
*with an introduction by*  
NORMAN ANGELL

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BRITAIN'S LABOR GOVERNMENT—VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

*Front Row:* Lord Addison, Lord Jowitt, Sir Stafford Cripps, Arthur Greenwood, Ernest Bevin, C. R. Attlee, Herbert Morrison, Hugh Dalton, A. V. Alexander, J. Chuter Ede, and Miss Ellen Wilkinson.

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION <i>by</i> NORMAN ANGELL . . . . .	9
WHAT THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY STANDS FOR <i>by</i> CLEMENT ATTLEE	13
THE ORIGIN AND RISE OF THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY <i>by</i> DAVID SHUB	17
BRITISH LABOR'S REVIVAL AND TRIUMPH <i>by</i> ROBERT ALEXANDER	27



## INTRODUCTION

By NORMAN ANGELL

This brief history of the British Labor Party and of Socialism in Britain can be of very great service to the cause of democratic socialism at the moment, and the authors are well advised to have included in it the speech of Attlee to the United States Congress.

For some reason or other British governments of whatever color are usually bad hands at explaining themselves and their purposes to the world at large, and the present Socialist government is perhaps no exception. In any case it is being sniped at by the extreme Right as well as by sections on the Left, in America as well as in certain other countries, and the combination can be a dangerous one for the future of social democracy everywhere.

It would be the extreme of folly to overlook the fact that Labor has had to take the responsibility of government at a time and in a situation of appalling difficulty. How difficult we can only realize if we keep in mind the normal fundamental economic fact of Britain's position which we so easily forget, this fact: Britain cannot from its own soil feed the people living on it. They can be fed only by industry (of which she does not in most cases even possess the raw materials) and a worldwide trade. That normal position has been worsened and rendered desperate by the effects of two world wars in a single generation, which have bled her white physically and economically. But a country which is dependent for its



physical existence upon a worldwide trade has not the conditions for its existence within its own control. The action of foreign nations by such things as tariffs, by defective monetary policies, by extremes of economic nationalism, or by the mere fact of widespread economic chaos, can make things impossible for Great Britain whatever degree of socialism or control of the country's economy might be introduced. The country lives by an international economy, but its government has only national power. In this respect Britain differs from both Russia and the United States. Both of the latter could, if pushed to it, make themselves self-sufficient. It would of course be at best for either of them a costly and foolish policy. But it could be done; the people need not starve. In Britain it could not be done at all; there would be famine, whatever degree of control or socialism. The fate of the Socialist government in Britain is dependent upon the action of other countries in a sense in which the Communist government of Russia never was. It is useful in this context, however, to remind the American opponents of "helping British socialism by a loan" that the stiffer the conditions which Britain faces the stiffer necessarily will be the controls, the rationing, the socialism.

What Britain is attempting to do at this moment—as Attlee implies in his address—is to make socialism, a managed and controlled economy, compatible with freedom and democracy—open parliamentary discussion, a free press, a political opposition, the right of all parties to state their case; the right of all to be free from the arbitrary violence of all-pervading police or political terror.

Britain's effort dramatizes what is perhaps the supreme issue before the Western world today. That issue is no longer Socialism vs. Capitalism, for Socialism in varying degrees is sweeping through the world and Capitalism everywhere is accepting it in increasing doses. The issue is whether a managed economy can be achieved

while preserving the political freedoms, or whether, as so far in Russia, the political freedoms have to be sacrificed in order to achieve the needed economic ends. Britain is attempting to give us socialism plus freedom, not socialism at the cost of freedom. But that issue does not depend entirely upon Britain. It depends also upon the economic policy which other nations may adopt towards her. For that reason it is vital for American socialists who value democracy to understand the nature of Britain's struggle, a struggle in which she stands almost alone, as she stood in the military struggle during that fateful year which followed the fall of France.



## WHAT THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY STANDS FOR

By CLEMENT ATTLEE

*(From his address to the Congress of the United States,  
November 13, 1945)*

I wonder how much you know about the British Labor Party? We are not always very well informed on the politics of other countries. I doubt, in fact, whether very many British citizens know the exact difference between a Republican and a Democrat in the United States. You have heard that we are Socialists, but I wonder just what that means to you?

I think that some people over here imagine that Socialists are out to destroy freedom, freedom of the individual, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of the press. They are wrong. The Labor party is in the tradition of freedom-loving movements which have always existed in our country; but freedom has to be striven for in every generation and those who threaten it are not always the same. Sometimes the battle of freedom has had to be fought against kings, sometimes against religious tyranny, sometimes against the power of the owners of the land, sometimes against the overwhelming strength of moneyed interests.

We in the Labor party declare that we are in line with those who fought for Magna Charta and Habeas Corpus, with the Pilgrim Fathers, and with signatories of the Declaration of Independence.

Let me clear your mind with regard to some of these freedoms that are thought to be in danger. In the ranks of our party in the House of Commons are at least forty practicing journalists. There are several clergymen, many local preachers, plenty of Protestants, some Catholics, and some Jews. We are not likely, therefore, to attack freedom of religion or freedom of the press.



As to freedom of speech, believe me, as a leader of our party for ten years I have never lacked candid critics in my own ranks and I have been too long in the Opposition not to be a strong supporter of freedom of speech and freedom of the individual.

We believe in the freedom of the individual to live his own life, but that freedom is conditioned by his not cramping and restricting the freedom of his fellow man. There is and always will be scope for enterprise, but when big business gets too powerful so that it becomes monopolistic, we hold it is not safe to leave it in private hands. Further, in the world today we believe, as do most people in Britain, that one must plan the economic activities of the country if we are to assure the common man a fair deal.

But our party today is drawn from all classes of society—professional men, business men, and what are sometimes called the privileged classes, as well as from the industrial working class. The old school tie still can be seen on the Government benches. It is really a pretty good cross-section of the population.

You may ask, why do people from the well-to-do classes belong to our party? May I refer to my own experience? Forty years ago as a young man studying law, just down from Oxford University, I first visited what was to be my constituency, Limehouse—a very poor district in East London. I learned from it first-hand the facts of poverty in our great cities. I became convinced that we must build our society on a juster foundation.

The result was that I joined the Socialist movement and eventually, after many years of striving, I find myself Prime Minister of Great Britain. The reasons that impelled me to join the Labor movement are the same that actuated so many of the members of my party, especially the great number of young men from the fighting services.

What is our attitude toward foreign affairs? We believe that we cannot make a heaven in our own country and leave a hell outside. We believe this not only from the moral basis of our movement, which is based on the brotherhood of man without distinction of race or creed, but also from an entirely practical standpoint. We seek to raise the standard of life of our people. We can only do so by trading with the rest of the world, and as good traders we wish to have prosperous customers.

The advance in methods of production so strongly exemplified in the United States has resulted in an immense output of goods

and commodities of all kinds. We in our turn show the same results on a smaller scale. Yet there are hundreds of millions of people living in the world at a standard of life which is the same as they have had for a thousand years.

There is ample room in the world for the products of the great industrial nations like our own to raise the general levels throughout the world. We, like you, believe in an expansive economy, and we can see no reason why, the need being so great, there should be any undue rivalry between us. We believe that the foundation of peace must be world prosperity and good neighborliness; that where science has placed such potential abundance before the human race we should collaborate to take advantage of it rather than scramble and fight for larger individual shares, which only results in an immense increase in poverty.

In our internal policies each [of our two countries] will follow the course decided by the people's will. You will see us embarking on projects of nationalization, on wide, all-embracing schemes of social insurance designed to give security to the common man. We shall be working out a planned economy. You, it may be, will continue in your more individualistic methods.

It is most important that we should understand each other and other nations whose institutions differ from our own. It is essential, if we are to build up a peaceful world, that we should have the widest toleration, recognizing that our aim is not uniformity, but unity in diversity. It would be a dull world if we were all alike.

In a town there may be a great diversity of character and habit among the townsfolk. To some of my neighbors I may be drawn closely by ties of relationship or by old memories; for others I may have more sympathy through sharing their religious convictions, although perhaps estranged by their political views. Yet I may be on good terms with them all and in close friendship with some. I hope to see a world as orderly as a well-run town, with citizens diverse in character but cooperating for the common good.

We have much in common. We have the language of Milton and Shakespeare, of Burke and Chatham, of Lincoln and of Jefferson. We have the memories of comradeship in a great adventure. Above all things we share the things of the spirit. Both of our nations hold dear the rule of law; the conception of freedom and the principles and methods of democracy; and most vital of all, we acknowledge the validity of the moral precepts upon which our whole civilization is founded.



Man's material discoveries have outpaced his moral progress. The greatest task that faces us today is to bring home to all people, before it is too late, that our civilization can survive only by the acceptance and practice in international relations and in our national life of the Christian principle, we are members one of another.

## THE ORIGIN AND RISE OF THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY

By DAVID SHUB

August, 1945, marked the sixtieth anniversary of the first attempt by British Socialists to put forward their own candidates for Parliament. The Socialist movement in Britain in 1885 was still in its swaddling clothes. There was already a comparatively strong British Labor movement but it had no relation to Socialism. British trade unionism is more than a century old. Already in the later sixties of the last century the trade unions called a congress to combat the passage of new anti-union legislation by Parliament. But the trade unions of that period were essentially conservative and there was little trace of a Socialist movement in England.

The first Socialist organization in England was the Social Democratic Federation, founded in September, 1881, the offspring of the Democratic Federation founded by Henry Mayers Hyndman. He was the son of a wealthy lawyer who spent more than \$500,000 on building churches in the London East End. Henry, born in 1842, was educated at Cambridge and upon his graduation entered journalism. He traveled widely and enjoyed an extensive acquaintance. Starting out as a radical he came under the influence of Karl Marx, and became a Socialist and a rigid Marxist. Later this aristocratic Socialist played a big role in the history of British Socialism. Under his leadership the Democratic Federation adopted a Socialist program two years after its establishment, and changed its name to the Social Democratic Federation.

The S.D.F. occupied itself more with theory, however, than with work and propaganda among the masses. Most of its leaders were hostile to the existing labor movement. They spoke much of "surplus value," "the concentration of capital," and the "coming social



revolution." However, their speeches had little effect upon the British workers, who could not understand their Marxian theories.

In December, 1884, there was a split in the Social Democratic Federation. A number of its most influential members, including the poet William Morris; Marx's youngest daughter, Eleanor; her husband, Dr. Edward Aveling; with Ernest Belfort Bax and others quit the Social Democratic Federation and formed the Socialist League. The immediate cause of the split was hostility to Hyndman, who was accused by the secessionists of dictatorial conduct and disregard of the opinion of the membership. But in addition to this purely personal difference, there was the conflict over the question of participation in parliamentary elections. Hyndman insisted that the Social Democratic Federation immediately put forward its own candidates, but Morris, Aveling, Bax, and others argued against this, believing that the organization was not strong enough to achieve any degree of success at the polls.

In the parliamentary election of 1885 the Social Democratic Federation nominated three candidates and waged an energetic campaign. The agitation of the Social Democratic Federation was directed principally against the Liberals. Hyndman and his colleagues were so eager to pursue the campaign that they accepted financial assistance from Conservative friends. The result was failure: in one district, where 10,400 votes were cast, the S.D.F.'s two candidates received 32 and 27 votes.

The members of the Socialist League naturally used to good advantage this failure of the S.D.F. The conflict between the two Socialist organizations became increasingly bitter. The Socialist League generally was opposed to the participation of Socialists in elections as long as they were too weak to make any impression. But there were also some members who did not believe in the parliamentary struggle at all. In time this Anarchist element in the Socialist League triumphed and its Socialist members left it in 1888, some, including William Morris, returning to the Social Democratic Federation.

Another important organization of that period was the Fabian Society, founded in 1883 by a group who believed in changing the existing social order but considered that this was possible only by a gradual process. Their method was based upon the strategy of Fabius Cunctator, the Roman general, who always sought to tire out the enemy by avoiding open battle, and who thus succeeded in defeating the great Hannibal.

### The Fabian Society

The members of the Fabian Society believed in the tactics of "exhausting" capitalism. The Society assumed a clearly Socialist character only after it was joined by George Bernard Shaw (1884) and Sidney Webb (1885). It was a propaganda organization, occupying itself with the study of social problems. Its membership embraced Socialists of every tendency, from extreme anarchists to the most moderate social reformers. The majority were close to the Social Democracy of Hyndman's school, but they did not join the Social Democratic Federation because they sharply disapproved of the S.D.F. leaders' acceptance of contributions from Conservatives, and they resented the Hyndman organization's rigid discipline.

They also disagreed with the Social Democratic Federation's tendency to base its hopes upon the unorganized workers. The organized workers and their leaders supported the Liberal party. There seemed little hope of winning them away from this capitalist allegiance, and so the Socialists of the S.D.F. and the Socialist League turned to the unorganized proletarians as the ones most likely to rise and put an end to the existing order of things.

The Fabians, on the other hand, did not appeal primarily to the working class at all. Although many workers attended the Fabian Society's meetings, its propaganda was levelled more particularly at the professional classes and the intelligentsia. The Fabian Society included within its ranks many of the leading young intellectuals of the day, such as Shaw, the Webbs, and H. G. Wells. The Fabians did not believe in the class struggle, declaring in their program that their appeal was to all classes of the population—not only to those who suffered under existing conditions but also to those who profited by them. The Fabians were convinced that capitalists and other privileged elements could be moved to the realization of the necessity of socialism.

They placed before themselves the task of spreading their ideas in the ranks of the Liberal party, of "permeating Liberalism with Socialist ideas," as they liked to put it. The Liberal party had for years nominated trade union leaders as candidates for parliament in many working-class districts. For example, for many years there were a number of Liberal M.P.'s affiliated with the Miners' Union.

The economic crisis of the eighties threw the British workers into a desperate situation. The number of unemployed was very great and there was widespread need and acute suffering. There were many demonstrations in the streets of the large cities, some



of which assumed a revolutionary character. Socialists of all tendencies were very active among the unemployed, but these failed to justify the hopes of those Socialists who looked to the unemployed rather than to the organized workers to take the lead in the building of a new society. Here and there the unorganized workers had the courage to face and fight the police, but they showed themselves incapable of waging a systematic struggle. The organized workers, on the other hand, continued to be loyal to the Liberal party, avoiding anything that might injure its interests.

However, with the appearance of the first indications of economic revival came a series of strikes in various parts of the country. The workers began to flock into the trade unions. In 1889 came the great dock workers' strike in London, led by young men of Socialist sympathies, which marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the British Labor movement. The success of this strike led to the formation of many new trade unions, inspired by a more progressive spirit, and Socialists of all groups came to work through these new unions. The Fabians tended to abandon the hope of bringing about Socialism through the Liberal party. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, after some hesitation, transferred their attention from the non-union workers to those in the new unions. Both groups turned their attention to the need of organizing an independent party of Labor.

The first Socialist to be elected to parliament as an independent labor candidate was James Keir Hardie in 1892. Hardie had worked for many years as a miner, was a leader in the Miners' Federation and a labor journalist. In 1888 he was nominated by his union as a candidate for parliament in Scotland and received 617 votes. Four years later he was elected from a London constituency. The next year a conference of Socialist and Labor organizations was held in Bradford at which the Independent Labor Party was formed. Keir Hardie presided and among the delegates were George Bernard Shaw, R. B. Cunningham-Graham, M.P., Eleanor Marx, and many well-known labor leaders. Hardie became editor of the "Labor Leader," the new party's weekly journal.

### Independent Labor Party

The Independent Labor Party's general program differed little from that of the Social Democratic Federation, except on one point. The S.D.F. had always waged bitter war against the trade unions. It claimed to be fighting the "reactionary leaders" of the unions, but in reality it distrusted the organizations themselves. The I.L.P.,

on the other hand, began immediately to seek the friendship and support of the organized workers and based its hopes chiefly upon the unions. The great growth of trade unionism in the middle nineties was largely under the leadership of I.L.P.'ers.

\* Most of the leaders of the I.L.P. were not concerned with Socialist theory and refrained in their propaganda from citing chapter and verse from Karl Marx and other Socialist theoreticians whose language was foreign to the British masses. They addressed the British workers in their own language and appealed to their sense of justice and common sense. The pamphlets of Keir Hardie and Robert Blatchford circulated by the I.L.P. were an enormous success, and it has been said that Robert Blatchford's pamphlet "Merrie England" did more to spread Socialist ideas in England than all the books and pamphlets distributed by the Social Democratic Federation.

Keir Hardie was defeated in the parliamentary election of 1895, and during the next five years he devoted all his time and energies to building the I.L.P. and extending its influence in the Labor Movement. At their Plymouth congress in 1899 the trade unions voted to form a committee "to increase Labor representation in Parliament." That was its avowed purpose, nothing more.

Although the resolution had been passed by a substantial majority, the top leaders of the Congress, remembering that very similar resolutions had met with little success in the past, took little interest in this one. They appointed an organizing committee composed of four members of the parliamentary committee, two of whom were Socialists, and two each from the Fabian Society, the SDF and the ILP, and left these to take responsibility for the expected failure. This committee, however, took its task seriously. It called a Delegate conference to meet in London in February, 1900.

The London conference, at which 120 delegates represented unions and Socialist groups with an aggregate membership of nearly half a million, proceeded to set up the Labor Representation Committee as a permanent body, friendly to the Trade Union Congress but not subordinate to it. It elected an executive committee with instructions to complete the organization, to conduct its affairs for the first year, and to provide for annual conferences thereafter. James Ramsay MacDonald was elected secretary and held this post for several years. The actual affiliated membership in 1900 comprised 376,000 persons, 23,000 of whom belonged to the three Socialist bodies. Early in 1901 the SDF withdrew, but when the second



conference met, the affiliated membership had grown to 455,000, and in 1902 it reached 861,000.

At the parliamentary election in September, 1900, the LRC nominated fifteen candidates, of whom two were elected—James Keir Hardie and Richard Bell. The latter deserted the movement two years later, but in 1902 and 1904 three seats were gained in by-elections.

At the election in January, 1906, the LRC had 50 candidates, of whom 29 were elected, and a month later it took the name of Labour Party.

In the eight general elections from 1906 to 1929 inclusive the Labor vote grew almost steadily from 323,000 to 8,331,000, and Labor's representation in parliament increased from 29 to 289.

### J. Keir Hardie

Keir Hardie is regarded as the father of the British Labor Party. "A Labor Party had to be born in England," wrote a leading Liberal journal, "but a Keir Hardie had to be born first to make possible a Labor Party." J. R. Clynes, a leader of the Labor Party since its inception, recently wrote\*:

"The early view taken of us was that we would always remain a small and harmless number. The accepted doctrine in our country was that only two parties had existed in the past and that that would continue. A charming and innocent view, which left out of account the probability that we would take the place of one of the old parties. That is what has happened, not by a jump, but by steady and approved stages.

"It is comparatively easy to instruct when the teacher can appeal to reason which is not chained to an old prejudice and can leave the facts to do their work. But forty or more years ago people had a fixed label in politics, and to that period belonged the sentiment in one of the highly popular songs of Gilbert:

"I often think it's comical  
"How Nature always does contrive  
"That every boy and every gal  
"That's born into this world alive  
"Is either a little Liberal  
"Or else a little Conservative."

\*"Christian Science Monitor," November 14, 1945.

"Party attachments were usually steadfast, though political knowledge was very slight. It was seldom that either of the two parties made any impression on the other, and the arguments of each fell on barren ground. But a third party, equipped with new arguments and a refreshing line of human appeal, won over austere electors who had previously been faithful to their side. These men not merely changed their politics. They had, so to speak, adopted a religion, for which politics were held as a faith, and the zeal of the missionary stimulated the activities by which, with unremitting toil, the propagandist work of the Labor Party was carried on.

"To these pioneers the most magnetic and revered name was that of Keir Hardie. He symbolized the determined warrior, and though gentle and courteous in manner, he was inflexible and resolute in the pursuance of objects which gathered strength as he toiled for them."

Until 1918 the Labor Party was a federation of trade unions, Socialist organizations, and local labor representation committees. In February, 1918, a special conference of the Labor Party met in London, at which a new constitution was adopted and which has remained in force ever since. Since then the membership of the Labor Party has consisted of two categories—those affiliated through member organization (unions, cooperatives, and Socialist groups) and those holding cards through local branches of the Labor Party itself. The new constitution contained a clause defining labor as including workers of both "brain and brawn"—all who work for a living.

The law does not permit a trade union to contribute out of its treasury to the funds of a political party nor to compel its membership as such to pay party dues; it does, however, permit the union to collect party dues along with union dues from such members as give their individual consent, and a very large proportion of the members of most unions accept this arrangement.

The Labor Party did not start as a Socialist party. Only in 1918 did it adopt a definitely socialist program, after many years of propaganda by which trade unionists became won over to Socialist ideas. Today virtually all trade-union officials in Britain are Socialists. Socialist influence has permeated not only the unions but large sections of the population outside. There is hardly a town or village in England where Socialism has not penetrated.



## First Labor Ministry

Six years after this change in Labor's program and organization, the party was first called upon to assume the reigns of government. The first Labor regime, formed in 1924, and headed by J. Ramsay MacDonald, was a minority government. The Labor Party's representation in the House of Commons was below that of the Conservatives, who likewise lacked a majority. The Liberals, however, helped Labor oust the Tory cabinet and for a while backed Labor, giving a Socialist government the support of a parliamentary majority.

Most of the members of the first Labor Government were workers who had never before had any experience in office. They were called upon to give orders and instructions to the various department's administered by the extremely efficient British civil service. The task was difficult, but the Socialist ministers acquitted themselves creditably. The Labor Government of 1924 put through many important reforms in the interest of the workers. It could not accomplish more because of its dependence upon the caprice of the Liberals. In the domain of foreign affairs it made a distinguished record.

The second Labor Government, also headed by MacDonald, found itself in a more favorable Parliamentary position. In the elections in 1929 it emerged as the strongest single party, but still short of a majority. Once more it was dependent in parliament upon the Liberals, but managed, nevertheless, to put through another program of important social legislation.

Unfortunately, the world depression set in soon after the Labor ministry went into office. Britain was particularly hard hit. Importing nearly sixty per cent of her food and raw materials, she is very dependent on foreign trade. The economic crisis placed the MacDonald ministry in an extremely difficult position. The collapse of world trade brought about a run on the gold reserves of the Bank of England, rendering that doughty old institution virtually bankrupt. Faced with this crisis, MacDonald and his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Snowden, decided upon a policy of severe retrenchment and high protective tariffs—a program to which the Labor Party had traditionally been opposed.

Meanwhile, the ministers, engrossed in a vast mass of governmental work, had tended to lose contact with the trade unions. The masses, unable to divine what was occurring behind the scenes and not adequately informed of the tremendous difficulties with

which the government had to contend, began to grumble about the governments' failures to carry out certain promises of the Labor platform.

The Experts Commission recommended the reduction of unemployment benefits, reduction in the pay of civil servants, and cutting down of social services. These demands were opposed by the trade unions. MacDonald was empowered by labor bodies to present his resignation to the King. He did so, but after an interview with the King, he formed a National Government embracing Conservatives, Liberals, and a few Laborites, including J. H. Thomas, leader of the railroad workers, Philip Snowden and Lord Sankey. On August 28, 1931, four days after the formation of the new Cabinet, MacDonald was deposed as leader of the parliamentary group of the Labor Party and Arthur Henderson, the former secretary of the party and foreign minister in the second MacDonald ministry, was elected in his place.

The new Government immediately dissolved Parliament and called new elections. The campaign was a very bitter one. MacDonald and Snowden, who for more than thirty years had been leaders of the Independent Labor Party and of the Labor Party, joined in vitriolic attacks against their former comrades and appealed to the voters to defeat them, claiming that should the Labor Party come out victorious, it would confiscate the banks and bring about a catastrophic panic.

The 1931 election brought the Labor Party its first serious defeat. As compared with the 8,331,000 cast in 1929, it polled 6,642,000 votes, which meant a loss of 21 per cent, but which still exceeded its previous high record in 1924 by more than a million. MacDonald's National Labor candidates got only 324,000. In many constituencies the Tories and Liberals agreed on candidates. As a result, the National Coalition elected 520 of the 615 members of the new Parliament, 471 of these being Conservatives, and the Labor Party's representation was cut from 289 to 52.

The "Great Betrayal" of 1931 was a staggering blow to the Labor Party. Many believed it was doomed to destruction. In less than two years, however, it began to recoup its losses both in organization and ideology due to a great extent to the efforts of Henderson; and at the next election, in 1935, with an increase of less than half a million for all parties, Labor regained 1,677,000, almost exactly matching its 1929 vote, and increased its representation from 52 to 152. As no election was held during the war, this was its status until 1945.



## BRITISH LABOR'S REVIVAL AND TRIUMPH

By ROBERT J. ALEXANDER

The political history of Britain during the 1930's was a dreary one. It started with the overthrow of the second Labor Government in the Fall of 1931, and the betrayal of Labor by Ramsay MacDonald and his friends. The regimes which succeeded this Labor Government were all cloaked in the title of "National," but they were basically Tory Cabinets with more or less window-dressing from the other parties. Their handling of the country's affairs was not too glorious. Internationally, the period began with the gloomy overture to appeasement in the case of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, continued through the refusal to take decisive action against the Italians in the Eithopian war, the negotiation of the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, and the refusal to act against German rearmament and the remilitarization of the Rhine-land. Events approached a climax in the shoddy drama of Non-Intervention in Spain, in the continued kow-towing to Japanese militarism in the Far East, and reached a crescendo in the final act at Munich in September, 1938. The outbreak of war in 1939 was an anti-climax.

The internal policy of the "National" Governments of the 1930's was equally a failure. "Stabilization" was achieved, but at the expense of millions of unemployed and of large sections of the nation. Unemployment was "stabilized" at three million, more or less, but the rates of unemployment insurance were niggardly and the means test forced the out-of-work to practically prostitute themselves to get anything at all. On the other hand, large areas—South Wales, the Northeast Coast, most of Scotland—were more or less abandoned economically, and although there was much talk of "relieving distressed areas," little concretely was done until the outbreak of war. Instead of attempting to introduce new industries



into these areas, to take the place of declining ones, such as coal mining and shipbuilding, just the opposite policy was followed. Hundreds of thousands of people from the Welsh mining areas, from Scotland, from the North of England, were picked up bag and baggage and moved to the center and south of England, while the new, rising industries, such as automobiles and electrical goods, were allowed to concentrate in the Greater London, Greater Birmingham, and other restricted areas in the southern half of the island. To a large degree, this was a voluntary development upon the part of business, but to a very large degree, too, it was actively aided and abetted by the MacDonald, Baldwin, and Chamberlain Governments.

During all of this time, the record of the Labor Party was not one to instil great confidence. The Party was very badly shaken by the events of 1931 when most of its top ranking leaders deserted it. The Party's membership in the House of Commons was so small all during the 1930's that it led to something of a feeling of frustration, since, in any case, the Labor Party was totally unable to overthrow the existing regime, except in a moment of supreme national crisis. Furthermore, the Party's leadership was not sufficiently bold and imaginative to present an inspiring alternative to that of the Tories.

Most of the MacDonaldites of 1931 had been intellectuals of one sort or another and had belong to the political rather than to the trade union side of the Labor Movement. Therefore, there arose in the minds of the trade unionists and their leaders a profound distrust of the political element in the Labor Party, and a determination upon the part of the trade union leaders to retain close hold on the machinery of the Party. This led to a considerable amount of dissension and controversy within the Party ranks.

### **Labor and the War**

The outbreak of war brought an end to appeasement, and a new feeling of national unity to the country. With the disastrous Norwegian campaign in April, 1940, popular feeling against the rulers of the 30's reached a peak and finally the Chamberlain regime was forced to resign. Labor immediately agreed to enter the new Churchill Coalition Government.

The principal Labor leaders entered the Cabinet. Clement Attlee became Deputy Prime Minister and chief government spokesman in the House of Commons when Mr. Churchill was not there.

Ernest Bevin resigned as Secretary of the world's largest trade union, the Transport and General Workers' Union, to become Minister of Labor. Herbert Morrison quit as Leader of the London County Council to become Minister of Home Security. Dr. Hugh Dalton became at first Minister of Economic Warfare and then President of the Board of Trade (a combination of our Secretary of Commerce and head of the O.P.A.). A. V. Alexander succeeded Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty, while Tom Johnston entered the Cabinet in 1941 as Secretary of State for Scotland. From time to time other important Laborites entered the Government.

The record of the Labor members of the wartime governments was an excellent one. It answered once and for all the claim which had frequently been made during the 1930's that the Labor leaders would not be of a big enough stature to run the country. Most of the nastiest jobs in the war effort were handled by Labor leaders, and with one or two exceptions the best jobs performed in the Churchill regime were done by the Laborites.

The Labor members of the Churchill Government were largely responsible for the social legislation which was passed and proposed during the years from Dunkerque to VE-Day. Soon after the Socialists entered the Government, one of the long-standing demands of the Labor Party—for a minimum wage for agricultural workers—was passed. During the first year, old age and widows' pensions were considerably increased and the hated means test for unemployment insurance, by which the worker had to prove himself a pauper, was abolished.

Later, even more extensive reforms were accomplished. A new education law was enacted. This raised the school-leaving age immediately to fifteen and ultimately to sixteen. It provided for extended education for those over sixteen, and for expansion of adult education. At the same time the doors of the exclusive "public schools" were opened more widely to children from "the other side of the tracks." Much of the credit for this bill goes to J. Chuter Ede, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Education in the Churchill Government. He is now Minister of Home Affairs in the Labor Cabinet.

Ernest Bevin, as Minister of Labor, pushed through a bill providing for minimum wages and maximum hours in the catering industry—which includes personal service in hotels, restaurants, and the like. This was a field which had previously been almost un-



touched by labor legislation, and Bevin's reform was pushed through in the teeth of a great deal of opposition from the rank and file Tories.

Bevin also sponsored a law providing that in industries which had union-management agreements, the terms of these agreements would be binding upon all members of the industry, insofar as wages, hours, and working conditions were concerned. In industries in which there were no such agreements, trade boards should be set up to establish minimum wages and maximum hours, under this law. It, too, was passed only over stiff Tory opposition.

Finally, in the Spring of 1945 Sir William (now Lord) Jowitt, then Minister of National Insurance, proposed a successful bill providing for family allowances—payment for the maintenance of dependent children—something which the Labor Party had advocated for years, and which was the first step in carrying out the Beveridge Report.

In addition to these laws actually enacted, Churchill's Labor Party Ministers were largely responsible for a remarkable series of "White Papers" or official proposals for future action by the government. These included the Beveridge Report on Social Security (made at the request of Laborite Minister of Reconstruction Arthur Greenwood); one on the organization of a National Health Service. They included a paper on methods for attaining full employment. These last two reports were in the eyes of Labor not entirely adequate to achieve the ends sought, but the fact that they were issued at all was testimony to the Socialists' influence in the Government.

### **"Unofficial Opposition"**

Not all of Labor's work during the war was done by its Government members. A small group of Laborites in the House of Commons functioned more or less unofficially as the Opposition during the five years of the Coalition Government. Ordinary processes of parliamentary government were somewhat in abeyance during the Churchill Coalition. In the first place this regime was a combination of all the major parties. Hence Clement Attlee, leader of the Labor Party, who should logically have been Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, was actually second in command in the Government as Deputy Prime Minister. At the same time, most of the Laborites who normally would have been the Opposition spokesmen were

Ministers. Furthermore, it was very dangerous for the Labor Party members to vote in opposition to the Government on any issue, because a sizable anti-Government vote by Labor M.P.'s would have meant that Labor Ministers should no longer remain in the government. And even the most ardent opposition elements in the Labor Party—such as Aneurin Bevan—did not actually want the Coalition Government overthrown. Finally, there was an electoral truce, under which it was agreed among the major parties that they would not oppose one another in by-elections, that they would jointly support the candidate of the Party which had held the seat in question before it became vacant.

And so it devolved upon a small number of Laborites, aided and abetted by members of splinter parties such as Common Wealth and the Independent Labor Party, to carry on criticism. Occasionally even the responsible leaders of the Party outside of the Cabinet—such as Arthur Greenwood—spoke and voted in opposition. For example, in 1942 Labor voted almost unanimously against the Government's stand on the Beveridge Report. Emanuel Shinwell was one of the most pungent Labor critics of the regime, but Aneurin Bevan was most persistent in criticizing the Government.

This opposition group was perhaps almost as important to the Labor Party as were its Ministers. They helped prevent the crystallization outside of the Party of a powerful opposition group which might have challenged the Labor Party's position in national life. At one time it appeared as if Common Wealth might develop into such a group. However, when the political truce ended and Labor returned to the political wars, Common Wealth largely disintegrated.

### **End of the Coalition**

The rising tide of opposition to the Coalition Government both inside and outside of the Labor Party had by the end of 1944 made the continuation of the Party truce after the end of the European War impossible and the existence of a post-war coalition government highly unlikely. By VE-Day Labor was in a defiant mood and was itching for a fight. The June, 1945, conference of the Party threw itself jubilantly into plans for the General Election. The conference enthusiastically endorsed the platform which the National Executive had put forward at the end of April when an election began to seem an immediate possibility.



The hue and cry of electioneering, plus the various misinterpretations of Labor's policy put forward by interested groups in this country, have served to hide the platform upon which the Labor Party was returned to power. The program was entitled "Let Us Face the Future: A Declaration of Labor Policy for the Consideration of the Nation." The Declaration had eight principal points of domestic policy: full employment, "industry in the service of the nation"; agricultural policy; housing program; change in land ownership; expansion of education; development of a national health service; and expansion of social insurance.

First on the agenda Labor placed the problem of full employment. The British Socialists pointed out that to achieve this goal, "the whole of the National resources, in land, material, and labor must be fully employed. Production must be raised to the highest level and related to purchasing power." The necessary high purchasing power, they said, can be achieved through "good wages, social services and insurance, and taxation which bears less heavily on the lower-income groups." But it will be necessary that the government be able to regulate capital investment in such a way as to prevent recurrence of booms and slumps. The Declaration points out that "planned investment in essential industries and on houses, schools, hospitals, and civic centres will occupy a large field of capital expenditure." But in addition, the Socialists proposed a National Investment Board which "will determine social priorities and promote better timing in private investment." The use of war-time factories and the location of industry were to be subject to government control.

"In suitable cases we would transfer the use of efficient Government factories from war production to meet the needs of peace. The location of new factories will be suitably controlled, and where necessary the Government itself will build factories. There must be no depressed areas in the new Britain."

To complete the Government's power to control investment, the Program said that the "Bank of England with its financial powers must be brought under public ownership and the operations of the other banks harmonized with industrial needs."

### **To Reorganize Industry**

Next, Labor devoted its attention to the organization of industry. The Declaration said: "If the standard of life is to be high—

as it should be—the standard of production must be high. This means that industry must be thoroughly efficient if the needs of the nation are to be met." It then goes on to point out that some industries during the war have shown themselves efficient and others proved to be inefficient. It would tend to judge the need for nationalization of industry on this basis. However, the Declaration said:

"The Labor Party is a Socialist Party, and proud of it. Its ultimate purpose at home is the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain—free, democratic, efficient, progressive, public-spirited, its material resources organized in the service of the British people. . . . But Socialism cannot come overnight, as the product of a weekend revolution. The members of the Labor Party, like the British people, are practical-minded men and women."

Some industries are "over-ripe for public ownership," but many others Labor would leave alone, at least for the present.\* Specifically, the Labor Party is for the immediate nationalization of the fuel and power industry, inland transport "by rail, road, air, and canal"; iron and steel. In addition to nationalizing these industries Labor advocated "public supervision of monopolies and cartels with the aim of advancing industrial efficiency in the service of the nation. . . ." There is no discussion of just how the publicly-owned industries should be run. But, generally, the mechanism of public corporations is held in high esteem by British Socialists. Herbert Morrison in particular has done much pioneering work, both in theory and practice in this form of public organization of industry.

The Party proclaimed itself for a "firm and clear-cut program for the export trade," with the State aiding to "get our export trade on its feet." But the export trade must be efficient in its own right and not live off State aid. It is interesting to notice the difference in emphasis put on exports by Labor and the Tories. The Tories ranked that as just about Problem Number One, while Labor put development for the home market first and foremost, with exports as a decidedly secondary consideration. Both sides have somewhat shifted their ground on this question since the Labor Party took office.

\*Since taking office the Labor Government has organized tri-partite "working parties" of Labor, management, and public representatives to draw up schemes for modernizing and making more efficient a number of industries still left in private hands.



Still in connection with the organization of industry, the Labor Party advocated "the shaping of suitable economic and price controls to secure that first things shall come first in the transition from war to peace and that every citizen . . . shall get fair play. There must be priorities in the use of raw materials, food prices must be held, homes for the people must come before mansions, necessities for all before luxuries for the few. . . . It is either sound economic control—or smash."\*

The third problem Labor tackled was that of agriculture and food. In this connection the Party advocated the continuation of many war-time expedients. For example, the war-time "County War Executive Committees" which allocated production among various farmers are to be continued "with suitable modifications and safeguards." On the other hand, many of the functions of the Ministry of Food, "including the bulk purchase of food from abroad and a well-organized system of distribution at home, with no vested interested imposing unnecessary costs," are also to be continued. Finally, new war-time food services such as factory canteens, British restaurants, free and cheap milk for mothers and children, are also to be kept.

### ***The Housing Problem***

Next the Declaration said, "housing will be one of the greatest and one of the earliest tests of a government's real determination to put the nation first." It advocated the establishment of a Ministry of Housing and Planning and said:

"Labor's pledge is firm and direct—it will proceed with a housing program with the maximum practical speed until every family in this island has a good standard of accommodation. That may well mean centralized purchasing and pooling of building materials and components by the State, together with price control. If that is necessary to get the houses as it was necessary to get the guns and planes, Labor is ready."

Closely allied to the housing problem is the matter of land ownership. In this "Labor believes in land nationalization," but

\*The Labor Government has not been afraid to keep various forms of rationing, even though they are extremely unpopular, politically.

as an immediate measure, the Declaration said, "the State and the local authorities must have wider and speedier powers to acquire land for public purposes whenever the public interest so requires."

This matter of land ownership is one of the crucial issues between the Tories and the Left, and came as near to overthrowing the Coalition Government in the Fall of 1944 as any other issue had done up to that time. The Tories were unwilling to grant even a slight increase in power of land acquisition to the Government.

In the matter of education Labor merely promised to "put . . . into practical effect" the Education Act of 1944. It also advocated the extension of "concert halls, modern libraries, theatres, and suitable civic centers."

In regard to health services, the Labor Party more or less endorsed the scheme outlined by the Coalition Government in its White Paper issued in 1944, which proposed the organization of a nation-wide health service, but left considerable leeway to individual members of the medical profession.

The Declaration pointed out that Labor has always fought for the extension of social insurance and has fought against the Tory policy of retrenchment in the social services. It said, "A Labor Government will press on rapidly with legislation extending social insurance over the necessary wide field to all."

### ***Labor's Decisive Victory***

It was upon the basis of this program—progressive and forward looking, yet definitely moderate and reasonable—that Labor won its overwhelming and in many ways surprising victory. Labor won 395 seats out of a total of the 640 in the House of Commons, the first time in its history that it won a clear majority. Labor got 150 more seats than all other parties put together. The Socialists won 202 seats previously held by other parties and won sixteen of the twenty-five new seats created in the 1945 reapportionment. It lost only three seats previously held. The "hard core" of Labor strength, as always, was in London and the bigger cities and in the mining areas. However, a very significant trend towards the Socialists occurred in the so-called "dormitory" or suburban areas where Tory majorities had hitherto been the rule. There was also a considerable incursion into the purely rural areas.

The composition of the new Parliamentary Labor Party is worth



noting. Margaret Cole points out\* that whereas in 1939 more than 50% of all Labor Members of Parliament were trade union or cooperative officials, most of them superannuated, only about a third of the Labor victors in 1945 were even financed by the trade unions—and many of these were not job-holders in the unions. In all, about 231 of the 390 odd Labor M.P.'s are trade union members. One hundred twenty-five came directly from the services, and three of these were Regular Army officers. About 150 came from manual working occupations—30 miners, 35 transport and general workers, 29 railway workers, 20 from distributive workers, 5 textiles. Of those with professional background, 44 are lawyers, 49 are university and school teachers, 26 are journalists, 15 are doctors or dentists. Eighteen are described as company directors or business men, four are farmers or small shop owners, while sixteen are managers or technical men—a new category among Labor P.M.'s. Eight of the twenty-one Labor women are "working housewives," the rest are professional women.

It is also interesting to note that twenty of the Ministers in the new government went to state-supported elementary schools, while only nine went to the more exclusive "public" schools. Many of the ex-elementary school students got further education either by means of scholarships at Universities, or through excellent adult-education institutions such as the Workers' Education Association or the National Council of Labor Colleges. Over 100 Labor M.P.'s took advantage of the latter alternative.

#### *Attlee as Premier*

A Labor Government was quickly formed when the results of the July election became known. Clement Attlee became Prime Minister. For nearly ten years "Clem" Attlee, as he's known inside and outside of the Labor Party, had been leader of the Party in the House of Commons. He comes from a good middle class family, had a "public school" and university education and then went to work in one of the worst slum areas of London as a social worker. He joined the Labor Party before the First World War, and in 1922 had reached enough prominence to be elected Member of Parliament for Limehouse—the London slum area in which he lived. As an M.P. he was unspectacular, but by dint of hard work and a

\*Margaret Cole, "1945 General Election and After," Fabian Society, London, October, 1945.

wide knowledge of issues he won a position in the leadership of the Parliamentary Labor Party. Very modest, he has always been one of the more intellectual of the Labor leaders, and a good Party man. When many of the Labor leaders deserted and many more were defeated in the election of 1931, Attlee became one of the top-flight figures in the Parliamentary Labor Group. In 1935, when George Lansbury resigned from its leadership because his pacifist ideas were not compatible with the Labor Party's expressed support of collective security, Attlee was chosen to succeed him.

During the war, Attlee was Deputy Prime Minister in Winston Churchill's Cabinet. When the split-up of the Coalition came in the first week of June, 1945, Attlee took the lead in bringing Labor to resume independent action. During the election, Attlee's stature in the eyes of the people grew considerably because of the reasoned, quiet, unemotional campaign which he conducted, in contrast to the almost hysterical performance of the Tories.

#### *Bevin, Hard Fighter*

Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, has for many years been one of the "Big Three" in the Labor Party. He is the leader of the trade union faction and began his career on the docks of Bristol. Through organizing ability, ruthlessness, and successful championing of the rights of the workers, he built up the most powerful trade union in Great Britain, the Transport and General Workers' Union. Always a power within the Labor Party, he had never been in Parliament until 1940 when he was elected in a by-election so that he could serve as Labor Minister in the Churchill Government.

During his five years as a Cabinet Minister under Churchill, Bevin developed a breadth of outlook, a grasp of world-wide problems, and a statesmanlike attitude of which even his best friends did not think him capable. But he never lost the toughness and gruffness which had done much to win him his leading position in the Labor Movement, and which have made him a refreshingly different sort of Foreign Minister. As Minister of Labor under Churchill he had complete charge of the task of mobilizing British manpower for the war effort. It is generally agreed that the job which he did was one of the most outstanding performances of the war. As a member of the War Cabinet for five years he had a vital part in the whole direction of the British war effort. More and more he developed an interest in things other than purely labor questions and inside the Labor Party he was often called upon to defend the conduct of the Labor Ministers before the rank and file. He was chosen to present the case of the Ministers in the Greek



issue before the Labor Conference in December, 1944, and more recently, he presented the foreign policy statement of the Executive in the June, 1945, Party conference, in a speech which won wide acclaim.

The appointment of Herbert Morrison to the rather ambiguous post of Lord President of the Council surprised many observers, until it became clear that in that position Morrison was to have general supervision of the Home policies of the Labor Administration. In the position of Lord President he is able to coordinate all of the complex jobs on the home front—nationalization of industry, housing, demobilization—while his chief rival, Bevin, supervises British foreign relations.

#### **Morrison, Administrator**

This is no new role for Morrison. As Minister of Home Security in the Churchill Governments, he had complete charge of civil defence and the general supervision of the home front during the war. He had such varied jobs as the organization of a national fire service, the administration of Defense Regulations, the handling of a bill for reapportionment of parliamentary seats and the resumption of local elections. He took a previously muddled department and made it one of the best in the Government. He is generally conceded to be the best administrator among the top-ranking Laborites. He often has shown a courage and a vision which mark him as way above average. As a Parliamentarian he is ranked with the very best, and his cockiness has won him the title of "the Lewisham bantam," bestowed by a leader of the Opposition. In the present Government his legislative abilities are constantly called into play in connection with his added position as floor leader, a job which involves piloting the Government's program through the House of Commons.

Morrison has been the leader of the more purely political element within the Labor Party. Most of his career has been spent in the politics of the London metropolitan area. As Secretary of the London Labor Party for a quarter of a century or more he built that up into the most powerful local political organization in the country. At the same time, as member of a borough council, then as a member of the London County Council and finally as leader of a labor government in the L.C.C. he has had a distinguished career in government. The Morrison Administration in London County won wide acclaim for its great housing projects and its

improvement of the educational system, the hospitals, and other public services. Morrison in his present position is virtually deputy prime minister for Home Affairs.

Aneurin Bevan holds one of the most crucial jobs in the Labor Cabinet. He is Minister of Health and in that position has charge of the housing program. One wide-awake British observer has said that "the housing problem will overthrow the next three British Governments." Be that true or not, the reputation of the third Labor Government may stand or fall according to the way it has handled the housing problem. During the 1945 campaign Labor claimed that there was an immediate need for four million houses, and until Labor took office very few steps had actually been taken to make good on this need.

#### **Bevan the Watchdog**

This is certainly the biggest and most crucial thing Aneurin Bevan has done in his career so far. He is a man of forty-five who was in his youth a miner in South Wales. Highly intelligent, he was aided by his union to get an education and finally in 1929 was elected to Parliament. Always on the Left, he was associated in the days before the war with Sir Stafford Cripps' agitation for a united front of all anti-Tory elements. With Cripps, he was expelled from the Labor Party in 1939, but was reinstated three years later.

Bevan acquired a considerable following in the country and many of the people regarded him as the watchdog of their interests during the war years. With salt and pepperish grey hair, a sharply outlined countenance which is a joy to cartoonists, and the hint of Wales in his speech, Bevan won popularity both by his friendliness and his forthright, if something reckless, utterances on all and sundry subjects. In the December, 1944, conference of the Party he was for the first time elected to its National Executive. As well as being a politician, Bevan was a journalist, editing "Tribune," one of the best political weeklies in Britain. At one time he was quite friendly with the Communists, but he is not a believer in the omniscience of the Kremlin or of King Street (in U.S. read 13th St.) while, even when they were ostensibly his friends, the Communists were sniping at him, rather ineffectually, in his constituency and elsewhere. So Bevan and the comrades have not been on very friendly terms for some time.



### *Dr. Hugh Dalton*

Dr. Hugh Dalton, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, is one of the leading intellectuals in the British Labor Party. He is an economist and teacher and the author of a number of books on Labor and Socialist policy. He has a professorial air, a balding pate, and would look quite in place on a Mid-Western American college campus. Dalton has always been a good party man and has not taken a position within the Labor Party antagonistic to the big trade unions, as have some of the intellectuals such as Sir Stafford Cripps and George Strauss. He has long been a member of the Labor Party Executive Committee. During the war Dr. Dalton was in charge of two departments in which his ability as an economist was given wide scope—the Ministry of Economic Warfare and the Board of Trade. In the latter position which he held during most of the war, it was Hugh Dalton's task to organize civilian supply rationing. And it is largely due to his efforts that the British people have come through the terrible ordeal of war showing its effects as little as they do. Although inflation was a considerable wartime problem in Britain, it is noteworthy that there was no runaway spiralling of prices in spite of the fact that civilian production in many lines of goods was practically non-existent for five years and that production of even the basic necessities of life was seriously restricted.

### *Cripps, Former Leftist*

Another man in the front ranks of the Labor Government is Sir Stafford Cripps. Fortunes of war treated his reputation rather badly. Because he was Ambassador to Moscow at the time Hitler invaded Russia, he was more or less credited in the popular mind with gaining Russia as an ally. His reputation soared, and he came home to enter the War Cabinet. Later, after his unsuccessful trip to India, Cripps' reputation was deflated as quickly and even more drastically than it had been inflated a few months before. During the balance of the War, he did a successful though unspectacular job as Minister of Aircraft Production.

Cripps is one of the upper class leaders of the Labor Party, and his father was the first Labor Party member of the House of Lords. During the 1930's he was the hope of the left wing of the Party. In 1939 he was expelled for heading a movement in favor of a United Front, in opposition to the Labor Party's avowed policy, but he reentered the Labor ranks in December, 1944. Although he is no longer quite the fair haired boy he once was, Sir Stafford

remains one of the important men in the Labor leadership. He has the reputation for being of Puritanical disposition, is gaunt looking and is known as being extremely earnest, though those who know him well say that in private he has a rich sense of humor, and unbends in a way which he does not permit himself in public. His present job is one of the most important in the Cabinet. He has charge of the "demobilization of industry," as well as control over civilian supply and rationing.

### *Isaacs and Shinwell*

The job of handling demobilization and the return of workers and ex-servicemen to peacetime industry has been turned over to George Isaacs as Minister of Labor and National Service. Isaacs is one of the most important figures in the British trade union movement, has for many years been head of the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation, and during 1944-45 was chairman of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress. He has for long been a member of Parliament and one of the leading figures in the Labor Party, and is a member of the Labor Party Executive Committee. His is a massive job in the new regime. More than five million soldiers had to be demobilized while that many war workers had to be shifted to civilian employment. It is Isaacs' job to find workers for such hard-pressed industries as housing, mining, and textiles. He was also in charge of the job of getting the Trade Disputes Act of 1926—which laid serious restrictions on the unions and the Labor Party—repealed.

To Emanuel Shinwell as Minister of Fuel and Power has gone the immense task of nationalizing the coal industry. During the war Shinwell shared with Aneurin Bevan the leadership of the unofficial Labor Opposition in Parliament, though he tended to work more as a lone-wolf than as one of a group. He is a man of considerable experience, having been a junior Minister in the 1924 and 1929 Labor Governments and having been in Parliament for nearly a quarter of a century. He gained much notice in 1935 when he defeated Ramsay MacDonald as member for Seaham Harbor. Although he was offered a post in the Churchill Government, he did not accept, because it is reported he did not consider the job offered worthy of his ability. In his present position, he has to revamp and resuscitate the sick coal mining industry.

These are the key figures in the Attlee Government. The success or failure of the Labor regime will more or less depend upon them.



However, there are a number of other Labor leaders in the government and out of it who are of interest and importance. For instance, there is Miss Ellen Wilkinson, the Minister of Education. Of her it was once said that "No woman in the whole of Britain has been more active, more persistent, or more annoying." She was for long a spitfire of the Labor Movement. She has flaming red hair, now tinged with gray, a biting tongue, and a sharp intellect. Starting her career as a militant suffragist before World War One, she was later one of the organizers of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers of which she is still a member. She was a Communist in the early twenties, but in 1924 was elected a member of Parliament as a Laborite. She has for many years been on the National Executive Committee of the Labor Party and was the Party's Chairman in 1944-5. She has the immense job of putting into effect the Education Act of 1944 which calls for greatly increased educational opportunities for the children and adults of Britain. She must wrestle with the problems of teacher shortages, building shortages, and entrenched class interest in things as they are. But if her past record is any indication, the British educational system will be infinitely better when the Labor Government comes up for reelection than it was when it went into office.

#### *Philip Noel-Baker*

Philip Noel-Baker, Minister of State and British delegate to the United Nations, is an important figure in the Labor Government. Before World War Two he was one of the principal influences in determining the Labor Party's policy on international issues. His election to Parliament in 1936 was considered as at least a temporary setback for the appeasement policies which were even then dominant in British Foreign Policy. In Parliament Noel-Baker was a persistent critic of appeasement and a staunch defender of collective security. Always a staunch supporter of the League of Nations during its career, he has taken a leading part in the birth of the United Nations Organization. It has been said of him that he knows more about world organization than any other living man. Presiding in the House of Lords is Chancellor Jowitt. He was the author of the Coalition Government's scheme to implement the Beveridge Plan, and was first Minister of National Insurance. In that position he pushed through the family allowances bill, which was the first step in the Beveridge proposal. He is a well-known lawyer and is an old-timer in the Labor Party. He quit the Party

in 1931 to follow Ramsay MacDonald into the "National" Government, but a few years later he returned to the Labor ranks and is now one of the most respected of the older leaders.

Aside from these Ministers there are a number of other Labor leaders of importance. For example, there are a number of figures in the trade unions whose names do not get into the newspapers quite so often as do the parliamentarians', but who perhaps carry as much or more weight behind the scenes.

Sir Walter Citrine, for example, is the veteran Secretary of the Trade Union Congress. Very moderate, he has not taken an active part in purely party affairs, but for a quarter of a century he has been the guiding spirit of the British trade union movement. A conciliator, he has nevertheless stood up for what he believes, and is widely respected throughout the British Labor Movement.

Arthur Deakin succeeded Ernest Bevin as Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union. A short, stock figure with a mild manner and a pleasant speaking voice, Deakin carries much weight in the Party, and the Trades Union Congress both because of the importance of his union and because of his close connection with Bevin. He is a moderate in his politics.

#### *Communists Out in the Cold*

Will Lawther is a leading pro-Communist. Although he is not thought to be a member of the C.P., he is a "fellow-traveler." He's president of the Mineworkers' Union, and has been very active in the work of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee. Some years ago, he was a member of Parliament, but nevertheless he has a certain contempt for the political side of the Labor Movement.

Jack Tanner, of the Amalgamated Engineering Union is secretary of the only large union which is under out and out control of the Communists. In this union, the chairman is a Communist and a majority of the union agents are C.P. members. The union as a national organization follows the C.P. line pretty completely. During the war the Communists made a good deal of headway in the trade unions. There was general sympathy upon the part of the workers for the fight put up by the Red Army and the Russian people, and the Communists capitalized upon this sympathy. Also in their typical way, they were able at one and the same time to protest utmost loyalty to the Churchill Government, and lead violent and reckless criticism of it when that suited their purpose. The Communists are attempting to use their hold on some of the unions



to get into the Labor Party local organizations from which they are barred at present. Their application for affiliation to the Labor Party was narrowly rejected in 1943 and again in 1946. In view of the poor showing the Communists made in the general election, the sharpening of issues between Britain and Russia, and the great increase in the Labor Party itself, it is unlikely that they will gain admittance to the Labor ranks.

The most militant anti-Communist among the ranking trade union leaders is Charles Dukes, head of the General and Municipal Workers' Union. In 1943 when the C.P. application was being discussed, he threatened to withdraw his union from the Labor Party if the Communists were admitted. His union has one of the best records among the larger organizations for getting its members to pay the "political levy," the voluntary contribution to the Labor Party's funds.

### *Journalists and Writers*

There are a number of younger leaders, many of them just elected to the House of Commons for the first time, who will take an increasingly active part in the Labor Party and the Government as time goes on. Among these are three journalists, Hannen Swaffer and Michael Foote of the "Daily Herald," and Maurice Webb of the "Sunday Express." Swaffer is generally considered one of the best journalists in the business, is a columnist and political reporter on the "Herald" and covered the San Francisco Conference for that paper.

Michael Foote is the son of a great Liberal of the last generation, Isaac Foote, and a brother of Dingle Foote, Liberal M.P. and a junior minister during the war. He took a particularly active part in the campaign leading up to the 1945 General Election, writing several of the most telling tracts put out by the Laborites in indictment of the nearly quarter century of Tory rule between the wars. In the election itself he defeated Leslie Hore-Belisha for a seat in Parliament from Plymouth, much to the pleasure of everyone on the Left. He is now one of the editors of Aneurin Bevan's old paper "Tribune."

Maurice Webb is one of those bright young men of the Left whom Lord Beaverbrook picks up from time to time to add spice and appeal to his papers. He runs a political column in the "Sunday Express" which is one of the most enlightening and authoritative

features in any of the British newspapers. His early career was as a paid organizer for the Labor Party, particularly in the Labor League of Youth. He has belonged to a number of trade unions and is now a member of the National Executive of the National Union of Journalists. He succeeded in winning one of the seats in industrial Yorkshire which has usually been more inclined to go Tory than Labor.

Hector McNeil, present Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, is a young Scottish M.P. of whom everyone speaks well. He's sandy-haired, alert and full of ideas. He also is a journalist by profession, but has long been active in politics, having been elected to the Glasgow City Council when he was only twenty-two. (He is Lord Provost—or Mayor—of Glasgow now.) He has been M.P. for Greenock, an industrial suburb of Glasgow since 1941 and is one of the most promising young men in the Labor Party.

Another of the junior Ministers who has proven himself very capable is John Strachey. He is Under-Secretary of State for Air, and has demonstrated a great deal of ability in parliamentary discussion as well as in the running of his Department. This is the same John Strachey who in the thirties was Britain's leading Communist and who frightened the more timid American government officials to the extent that they twice barred his entry to this country. He quit the Communists right after the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939 and had a staff job in the R.A.F. during the war.

Jennie Lee, the wife of Aneurin Bevan, is also a Scot like McNeil. She went through Edinburgh University on a scholarship and became a member of the Students' Socialist Society while still at the University. However, she didn't have time to practice her profession as a teacher because she ran for Parliament in 1929 and was elected, to become the youngest member of the House of Commons. She was defeated in 1931. Until just before the war, Jennie was one of the principal leaders of the Independent Labor Party, but she quit them because she disagreed with their anti-war position. In 1944 she rejoined the Labor Party and was immediately swamped with invitations to run for Parliament. She finally accepted one from the industrial Midlands of Staffordshire, and was elected with a thumping majority, in the General Election. She has now taken over the editorship of "Tribune" from her husband, and she is one of the liveliest, sanest, and best-loved figures in the Labor Movement.

The Labor leader who is most over-rated in the United States



is Harold Laski. Although Laski was in June, 1945, elected chairman of the Labor Party his actual influence in the Party is not very great. He has none of the attributes of real power within the Party—he is neither a trade union official, a local Labor Party political leader, nor an M.P. He is a member of the Executive, but actually has little following of his own. He is a professor of political science at the London School of Economics. Laski did not run for Parliament in the 1945 election. He certainly does not determine Labor Party policy, nor does he have a very decisive voice in its determination.

### *Labor Party's Machinery*

No matter how good a program they may have, and no matter how capable the top leaders of the Labor Party may be, their regime could not be a success—indeed they could never have come to power—unless they had a powerful party in the country to support them and to help them both in framing policy and getting their ideas over to the people. The Labor Party leaders do have such an organization.

The basic units of the Labor Party are the local Labor Party clubs and the local trade union organizations. The latter, of course, only engage in political activity as a side issue. On the other hand, the local clubs are organizations upon whom falls the chief responsibility for the agitational, organization, and election work of the Party. The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Labor Party say that every individual member of the Labor Party must:

- “(a) Accept and conform to the Constitution, Program, Principles and Policy of the Party.
- “(b) If eligible, be a member of a Trade Union affiliated to the Trades Union Congress or recognized by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress as a bona fide trade union.
- “(c) Unless temporarily resident abroad, be a member of a Constituency Labor Party either, (I) where he or she resides, or (II) where he or she is registered as a Parliamentary or Local Government elector.”

All organizations affiliated to the Labor Party must:

- “(a) Accept the program, principles and policy of the Party.

- “(b) Agree to conform to the Constitution and Standing Orders of the Party.

- “(c) Submit its Political Rules to the National Executive Committee.

The members are organized locally into ward committees in the cities or local parties in the outlying districts. It is in these organizations that the spadework of the party is conducted—literature distribution, house to house canvassing, social activities. This is where an aspiring Labor Party candidate for office is likely to get his start. In addition to these Ward and Local Parties there are likely to be a number of Women's Sections organized in a constituency. These are organizations of the Labor Party devoted specifically to women's problems and activity among the women of the community.

All of these organizations are sub-groups of the Divisional Labor Parties. A Divisional or Constituency Labor Party covers the area of a Parliamentary Constituency. It is this organization that has supervision of the propaganda, agitational, and electoral activities. It is run by a Governing Committee of delegates from ward or local parties, who elect from their midst an executive committee to carry on the everyday work of the Divisional Labor Party.

It is in the choosing and backing of Parliamentary candidates that the Divisional Labor Party is most important. A selection committee is chosen by the General Committee of the Divisional L.P. and candidates are invited to present themselves. Usually, if there is a trade union which is particularly strong in the district, it will have a candidate to put forward. Perhaps two or more trade union candidates will be proposed. Often, too, the Ward or Local parties will have someone among their members whom they desire to nominate. In any case, all of these candidates will be asked to appear at a certain time to be questioned by the selection committee. If no nominees are presented, the Selection Committee gets in touch with the National Headquarters of the Labor Party, which keeps on hand a panel of likely prospective candidates who are approved by the National Office. After all of these names have been thoroughly gone over, a choice is made by the Selection Committee, and is referred to the Governing Committee. At the present time such things as the nominee's nation-wide reputation, his knowledge of the needs of the locality, his age and whether or not he—or she—has been in the Services are important factors in



choosing Parliamentary candidates. Also of great importance, particularly in regard to trade-union backed candidates, is how much money the organization backing the candidate is willing to put up towards the campaign expenses.

For the benefit of American readers it should be noted that under the British system a candidate for parliament does not have to live in the district where he is nominated.

After the Parliamentary nomination has been approved locally, the name is sent to the National Headquarters for the approval of the National Executive Committee, which has final say. The figures for the 1935 election show that 133 of the 552 Labor candidates in that contest were nominated by trade unions. The mineworkers offered 39 candidates, the transport workers and general and municipal workers each backed eleven, the railroad clerks and railwaymen each backed ten. Of the one hundred fifty-four successful Labor candidates, seventy-nine were trade union backed, sixty-six were nominated by the Labor Parties. This would indicate that at least up until the 1945 election the trade union candidates tended to get the safe Labor seats while the non-unionists had to contest the more difficult posts. However, as we have seen, the situation was considerably altered in the election which put the Third Labor Government in power.

Candidates for local office are chosen by the local groups in conjunction with the Divisional Labor Parties, or where the region involved is that of a Division, they are chosen by the D.L.P. by methods similar to those for Parliamentary candidates.

### *Geographic Groupings*

It is the job of the Divisional Labor Party to coordinate the activities of the local Labor Party clubs with those of the trade union, socialist, and cooperative societies which may be in the neighborhood. For example, the executive committee of a Divisional Labor Party would do its utmost to get the largest possible number of trade unionists in the Division to pay the political levy, the voluntary contribution to the Labor Party through the trade unions.\* They would try to get the unions to take an active part

\*Until 1926 the unions appropriated money from general funds for the Labor Party. But this was forbidden by the Trades Disputes Act of 1927 and a voluntary "political levy" was substituted. This law has now been repealed.

in the election campaigns and other activities. They would perhaps urge the unions to put forward parliamentary candidates for adoption by the Labor Party. The Divisional Labor Party would also cooperate as fully as possible with the local Cooperative Union and Cooperative Party organization if such a unit existed. And they would try to fit the Fabian Society local organization into the activities of the Party in the Division, perhaps getting them to do research on projects of the Labor members of the Local Authorities.

The Divisional Labor Party would also organize the campaigns of Labor candidates for local offices in the Constituency. It would aid Labor members of local authorities by organizing popular support for their programs and aiding them in reelection campaigns. The Divisional Party is a key organization because it is the lowest level at which the activities of all elements of the Labor Party are integrated—party clubs, trade unions, socialist societies.

Above the Divisional Labor Party organizations are eleven regional groupings for London, Scotland, Wales, East Midlands, etc. These Districts have chairmen, secretaries, and treasurers. Perhaps the London unit is a good example of these groups. There is a full-time secretary in charge of the District, a man who has held the job since 1924 and who has a knowledge of organization and a breadth of outlook that is exceedingly valuable. There is also a full-time Agent and a Women's Secretary, as well as an office staff of several girls. These people have charge of keeping an eye on all of the local parties, helping them where needed, occasionally reorganizing a flagging constituency. They help in the choice of candidates, they help organize county-wide meetings and demonstrations, and secure speakers for local groups. They organize study sessions and classes. They work very closely with the Labor members of the London County Council, helping them collect necessary information and aiding in other ways. An annual conference of the London Labor Party is held every year at which the problems of the capital are thrashed out. The existence of the organization has been one of the principal explanations for the success which Labor has had in London during the last decade or more during which the city has had a Socialist Administration.

### *The Annual Conference*

The highest organization in the Labor Party as a whole is the National Annual Conference. Usually held at Whitsuntide in the Spring of each year, these conferences make major party policy



decisions, elect the National Executive and are the final court of appeal within the Party. Representation in the Conference is based in the case of the trade unions upon one delegate for each 5,000 members or part thereof "on whom affiliation fees were paid for the year ending December 31 preceeding the Conference." In the case of Constituency Labor Parties the basis is also one delegate for each 5,000 members or part thereof, except that in the case where the fraction exceeds 2,500 an additional woman delegate may be appointed. There are also delegates from the regional federations of the Labor Party, and members of the Parliamentary Labor Party, the National Executive Committee, accepted Parliamentary Candidates, the National Secretary and the Chairman and one delegate of the Labor Guild of Youth are ex-officio delegates with voice but no vote.

Voting in the conference is based on the number of members the respective delegates represent. Thus, for example, if the Mineworkers Union which has some four hundred thousand members affiliated to the Labor Party, sends ten delegates each of those delegates will have forty thousand votes. A delegate representing a Divisional Labor Party with one thousand members, however, will have only one thousand votes. Each delegate is provided with a card upon which is printed the number of votes he represents, and when a "card vote" is taken these are raised and the result of the poll is determined from them.

This basis of representation gives the trade union an overwhelming preponderance. For example, in the 1943 Annual Conference there were fifty-nine trade unions represented by 364 delegates with 2,210,000 votes. The Socialist Societies were five in number (Fabian Society, Haldane Society, Jewish Socialist Labor Party, Socialist Medical Association, and National Association of Labor Teachers) with five delegates representing 6,000 votes. The Co-operative Societies had six delegates with 26,000 votes. The Labor Parties represented were 444 in number with 449 delegates and only 474,000 votes, while the Federations of Labor Parties were seventeen in number with seventeen delegates and 17,000 votes.

It is customary for all the delegates from any given trade union to vote en bloc at the Conference, so it would be possible for a coalition of a few of the larger unions to control the Conference, and such a thing has occurred many times. However, the intellectual leadership at the Conference generally comes from the delegates of the Divisional Labor Parties and it is only occasionally

that the trade unions are sufficiently united on any policy to force the Conference to their way of thinking.

It is the Annual Conference which sets the final policies of the Party. For instance, the final decision upon the part of the Labor Party not to continue in the Churchill Coalition Government after the conclusion of the European war was taken at the Blackpool Conference of the Party in June, 1945. This decision was binding upon the Labor M.P.'s in the Government, who were then duty-bound to resign or cease being Labor members. It is at the Annual Conference, too, that the rank and file members of the Labor Party are able to air their grievances.

### **Nation-Wide Controls**

The Annual Conference elects the National Executive Committee of the Labor Party, in sections. That is, the trade union delegates choose twelve members, the Labor Parties choose seven and there are five women members and one representative of the Socialist and Co-operative organizations elected by the Conference at large. It also elects the national officers of the Party, including the Chairman, National Secretary, and Treasurer. The National Executive meets once a month or more frequently throughout the year, and carries on the Party's activities between Conferences. It has various committees and sub-committees which develop and carry out the Party's policies. For instance, a Labor Party group worked for many months with the Trade Union Congress and the Mineworkers' Union on the plan for nationalization of the coal mines.

Working under the National Executive Committee is the Staff of the Labor Party. This is headed by the National Secretary. For many years this post was held by James Middleton, one of the founders of the Labor Party. It is now held by Morgan Phillips, formerly head of the Research Dept. The Secretary is the chief executive officer of the Party, administering its day to day affairs and overseeing the work of other members of the staff. There is a National Agent in charge of organizing activities, who has under him a staff of paid full-time Regional and District Agents. It is their job to keep contact between the Local units of the Party and the National Organization, to organize new Labor Parties where such do not exist, to aid such local units as are in difficulty, to help in securing national speakers and organizing propaganda for the local Parties. In addition there are departments organized to deal



with various phases of the Labor Party's activities, with full-time paid officials in charge of each department. These include sections handling press and publicity, international affairs, finance and research. On special occasions, extraordinary committees are created. For instance, Herbert Morrison headed a special campaign committee to direct the work of the 1945 General Election Campaign.

Working under the direction of the National Secretary are a number of organizations closely affiliated to the Labor Party. For instance, in normal times there is a Labor Guild of Youth, which lays particular stress upon organization and work among young people. There is a Society of Labor Candidates composed of all candidates adopted for Parliament. (Candidates for Parliament in Britain are chosen long in advance of the General Election. Often just as soon as one election is finished a District Labor Party will adopt a candidate for the next contest.) And there is a Workers Film Association which produces labor films and arranges for their exhibition.

The trade unions and socialist and cooperative societies which belong to the Labor Party carry on activities complementing, but not directly part of, those of the Labor Party. For example, the Fabian Society is particularly active. It has several Bureaus which organize research in particular fields, notably foreign affairs and colonial affairs. They publish much periodical and pamphlet material. The Colonial Bureau is in active contact with colonial nationalist and labor organizations. It was influential in the negotiations leading up to the adoption of a new constitution for Jamaica a year or so ago. The International Bureau on the other hand is quite active in laying the groundwork for a new Socialist International. The Society has local units which engage in research and carry on local education activities for Socialism and the Labor Party. The Society also organizes a number of Conferences in which it tries to inform the Labor M.P.'s on various issues, gathering facts to use as a basis for interrogations and speeches in the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

The Cooperatives are an important element in the Labor Party. They are associated with the Party in several ways. In the first place a number of cooperatives, of which the most important is the great Royal Cooperative Society in London, are affiliated directly to the Labor Party. But much more important is the close co-operation between the Labor Party and the Cooperative Party.

The latter is the political arm of the Cooperative Union, the central cooperative organization in Britain. The Union puts up most of the money to finance the Cooperative Party and the party's leaders come from the cooperative movement. In localities there is very close liaison between the Cooperative and Labor parties, and in most cases the two groups form a single unit in the local government bodies. In the Parliament, the members of the Cooperative Party are part of the Parliamentary Labor Party, and a number of leaders whom the general public thinks of as Labor Party leaders—such as A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Alfred Barnes, Minister of Transport—are actually members of the Cooperative Party. There is another way in which the two groups cooperate. Both the Labor Party and the Cooperative Union have representatives on the National Council of Labor which is the top liaison agency in the Labor Movement, the Trades Union Congress being the third member of the group.

The Co-ops are a very important element in the Labor Party's strength, because they go right down into the homes of the working people. They have been a very important factor in arousing the interest of women in particular in the Labor Movement and in the Labor Party, and a considerable number of women have gone from activity in the cooperative movement into activity in the Labor Party.

### *The Parliamentary Group*

Of course the aim of the Labor Party is to secure enough Labor members of Parliament to form a Government. These members, with those of the Co-operative Party, are organized into the Parliamentary Labor Party. The Parliamentary Labor Party has a good deal of autonomy, and so long as its decisions fall within the general lines laid down by the Annual Conferences and the National Executive, the Labor members are free to determine their policy in the House. For example, in the ordinary run of business all decisions will be made by the Parliamentary Labor Party, but in an issue such as that posed in 1940 when Labor was invited to enter the Churchill Government, the final decision, pending the Annual Conference, was left to the National Executive of the Party.

The Parliamentary Labor Party elects from among its members an Administrative Committee who carry on the day to day management of affairs. But once a week all Labor M.P.'s meet in a caucus



to determine how they will act on certain crucial issues to be discussed in the House of Commons during the coming week. The Party's decisions at these Conferences are supposed to be binding upon the members, unless it is decided to the contrary, with the reservation that any members having scruples about the Party's position may abstain from voting. This is a basic element in the Labor Party's method of organization. This was the way in which Ramsay MacDonald, who was a pacifist, remained in the Party throughout World War One in spite of the fact that the Labor Party supported the war. He merely abstained from voting on any questions in which the issue arose. And it was when the I.L.P. members insisted in 1931 on their right to vote *against* the line laid down by the Parliamentary Labor Party, rather than to abstain from voting, that they were forced to quit the Labor Party. On most occasions, Party discipline is not too strict, and no punitive measures are taken if a member opposes the Party line. If such conduct is too persistent, however, or is on any issue which the Party deems vital, action is likely to be taken. For example, in the Spring of 1944, after Aneurin Bevan had several times voted in opposition to the Party's position, and urged other Labor M.P.'s to do likewise, he was threatened with expulsion. In the Spring of 1939 Sir Stafford Cripps, Bevan, George Strauss, and others actually were expelled. This was done by "withdrawing the Labor whip" from these members, or in other words, excluding them from the Labor caucus. They appealed to the next Annual Conference, but the withdrawal of the whip was upheld and they were officially expelled from the Party. This meant, of course, that they could not belong to any local Labor Party organization, or attend any of the Party's conferences in an official capacity.

Recently, the Parliamentary Labor Party has launched an experiment in loosening of Party discipline. The so-called Standing Orders which regulated the conduct of members of the Parliamentary Labor Party were reduced from ten in number to three, and these three were suspended until the end of the 1946 session of Parliament. This is quite a remarkable loosening of the reins and indicates that the Labor Party is pretty sure of the loyalty and self-discipline of its Members of Parliament.

At the head of the Parliamentary Labor Party is the Leader of the Party. He is supposed to be its chief spokesman and when Labor gained a majority in the House of Commons the Party's Leader became Prime Minister. The Labor Party differs from

other British political parties in that the Leader is subject to the control of the Parliamentary Labor Party and of the other organs of the Party, whereas the Leaders of the Liberal and Tory parties set the policies which their organizations are supposed to follow.

### **Two Live Problems**

One particular problem in connection with the unique position of the trade unions in the British Labor Party has been that of choosing trade union parliamentary candidates. Up until the 1945 election there seemed to be a lamentable tendency for the unions to regard a seat in Parliament somewhat of in the light of old age compensation for superannuated trade union officials. The unions tended to nominate for the sure Labor seats old union officials just about to retire from active service in their organizations. This did not add to the liveliness or effectiveness of the Labor Party in the House of Commons. Ellen Wilkinson, in addressing the Trades Union Congress in October, 1944 as the fraternal delegate from the Labor Party, pointed this tendency out to the trade unionists at some length and perhaps partly as a result of this, the trend was much less noticeable in the 1945 General Elections. Many more young men were nominated by the trade unions, many of them not even active trade union leaders.

Of course, another serious and as yet unsolved problem has been the question whether or not the smaller Socialist parties outside of the Labor Party, such as the Independent Labor Party and Common Wealth, should be admitted to the Party's ranks. Since the exit of the I.L.P. in 1931 there has been no active socialist political party within the Labor Party. The reason for this was pointed out by Morrison in a speech to the 1943 Annual Conference in which he said:

"If they agree with the Labor Party . . . I cannot see the need for their continued existence. On the other hand, if they do not agree with our policy and principles, they ought not to be humbugs and apply for affiliation. . . . That was the trouble with the I.L.P. When this Party did more of its own propaganda and publicity work and so on, any reason for the I.L.P.'s existence became less and less and they were forced, partly against their will, to justify their continued separate existence by beginning to evolve a policy that was distinct and separate from that of the Labor Party. The situation became so impossible that they did not get expelled but



they walked out, and they were honest for walking out, and I respected them for walking out."

On the other hand, many individuals affiliated to the Labor Party feel a necessary for the existence of some platform from which the more purely Socialist elements can address their fellow members and the country at large. Many more or less conservative, yet Socialist individuals, including at least one Labor member of the Churchill Coalition Government, told this writer that they should like to see either the return of the I.L.P. or the formation of some new Socialist group within the Labor Party.

This whole issue is complicated by the question of the Communists. Many of those who would like to see the I.L.P. and even Common Wealth inside the Labor Party, don't want the Communists in, so they feel forced to oppose the entrance of any group at all. The issue of Communism inside the Labor Party is one of long standing. When the Communist Party was originally formed right after the first World War there was nothing to keep the Communists out of the Labor Party. In fact many C.P. members attended Labor Party conferences, including the present Secretary of the British C.P., Harry Pollitt, who attended several times as a delegate from the Boilermaker's Union, and for some time a Communist sat as a Labor Member of the House of Commons.

However, by the middle twenties a rule was passed making it impossible for a Communist to belong to any local Labor Party club or hold office in the Party. Later a rule was also passed making it impossible for a known Communist to be a delegate to the Labor Party Conference even as a trade union delegate.

In recent years the Communists have been trying to get this rule reversed. They argue that through the trade unions they already belong to the Labor Party, if only surreptitiously, and that they might as well be in openly. However, the opponents of their admission point out that were they to get into the local units of the Labor Party organization they would be likely to drive away those disgusted with their policies. They would through their fanaticism, scheming, and "deals" come to control many of the local parties, just as they have in the past few years come to control many of the local Trades Councils, which correspond to our city central bodies.

Periodically, the Communists have demanded admission to the Labor Party, and quite regularly there has been an exchange of letters between Labor Party and Communist Party officials on the

matter. Each time, however, the proposition has been turned down. At the present moment, when Britain has a Labor Government in power, a government which is attempting, among other things, to show that democratic socialism is much better than totalitarian "socialism" as a way of life, it would be little short of disastrous for the Labor Party to admit the Communists. In view of the world-wide Communist attempt to discredit the British Labor Government, the idea of Communist affiliation to the B.L.P. seems even more incongruous than might otherwise be the case.

### No Time Wasted

During the months since its taking office the Attlee Government has not wasted any time. It set about immediately to put into operation the proposals in its program. The Bank of England and the coal mining industry have been nationalized; the Labor Government's version of the Beveridge Plan, in some ways more liberal than the original, has been passed. A measure putting workmen's compensation on the basis of social insurance rather than the employer's liability to pay has been made law. Emergency powers to regulate Britain's economic structure have been extended for the life of the present Parliament. The hated Trade Disputes Act of 1927 has been repealed, thus lifting some of the most onerous restrictions on British trade unionism.

In the field of housing some progress has been made. Local authorities have been given extensive powers of land acquisition for housing purposes; national government subsidies for local housing schemes have been tripled. It is expected that during the summer months of 1946, the first concrete results in the form of houses built will be forthcoming.

Reconversion has resulted in some criticisms of the Government, but as yet nothing very serious has occurred, while demobilization has gone considerably faster than was originally planned by the Churchill Coalition Government. A National Investment Bill, carrying out another Labor Party campaign promise, has been passed.

In foreign policy the Labor Government has seemed to have several aims, the primary ones being the protection of democratic rights in countries in which Britain has an interest; the revitalization of British foreign trade; the protection and maintenance of British interests in various parts of the world. The Labor Government's colonial policy has been marked by a number of new and



more liberal constitutions for British colonies. But the most spectacular even in this field has been Prime Minister Attlee's offer of independence to India.

These, then, are the achievements of British Labor. The British Socialist Movement is the strongest democratic socialist movement in the world. Its success or failure will go far to determine whether or not the great economic and social problems which face the industrial world of today can be solved in a democratic way. It is as yet too early to get a definite answer to this question, but the past history of the Labor Party indicates that it has excellent equipment in leadership, tradition, and purpose to achieve this high aim—socialized economic life and democratic political life.

#### AMERICA'S STAKE IN THE BRITISH LABOR GOVERNMENT

It is unnecessary to explain to American Socialists the importance of the triumph of British Labor. It means that for the first time a democratic Socialist regime controls one of the world's principal countries. It means the first chance to put into effect the program of Social Democracy for which Socialists have fought for three-quarters of a century. But those Americans who are not Socialists should also understand the great stake which the United States has in the success or failure of the British Labor Government.

Any British Government—Labor or otherwise—is faced with the hard fact that in order to live, the British people must trade. Even on wartime rations, the British import nearly half of their food and raw materials, and in order to pay for these they must export manufactured and semi-manufactured goods. With a population twelve times as dense as that of the United States, there is no alternative, except to depopulate the island.

Faced with this situation, the British have two needs—an immediate and a long range one. Immediately, they need aid in reconverting their industries—which were much more completely tied up in war production than were our own—to peacetime production while at the time maintaining the standard of living of the British people. If the British do not receive aid, so that they can buy food and raw materials needed without having to pay for them immediately in manufactured goods, the only alternative is to reduce the standard of living, by cutting down on the already meagre food and clothing rations and by postponing almost indefinitely the share of

the British people in the products of the reconverted civilian industries. To some degree the British Labor Government has already had to adopt this policy. The British today receive less food than they did during the war, and their skimpy clothing coupons must last a third again as long. The only way in which this process can be prevented from going even further is by immediate financial aid, to permit the British to import the required food and materials. . . . Which means that the long-postponed American loan to Britain gave tardy and only inadequate relief.

#### Britain for "One World"

The second necessity of the British is of the long-run variety. The British need a large dose of international free trade. They must sell their products, and this they cannot do if most of the rest of the nations put up iron-clad tariff barriers intended to keep out all foreign commerce. In the case of the United States, this involves the lowering of our fantastically high tariffs—which have for decades been among the world's steepest—and our admission of the fact that if we, too, are going to export, we must be willing to receive imports in return. In the case of Britain, if we are going to expect her to take our wheat and cotton, we must be willing to buy a certain proportion of goods from her.

Thus, the success or failure of the present British government depends to a considerable degree on these international economic factors which are outside of the immediate control of Britain, and in which the United States is the single biggest factor. We can go far to assure either the success or the failure of the social experiment now in progress in Britain. That being the case, does the United States have a stake in seeing to it that the British Labor Government succeeds?

*Definitely yes.* Our stake is partly economic, but to a much greater degree it is political. Our economic stake in Britain's future is tied up with our desire to expand our trade. Britain has always been one of our biggest customers, and the relationship has been a mutually satisfactory one. If this is to continue, Britain must be aided over the rough road immediately ahead. And, more generally speaking, if we are going to trade with Britain or anyone else on a large scale, we must make up our minds we are going to import as well as export.

Of course, the United States *can* live without foreign trade. But



the democratic and libertarian United States which has been Man's hope for a century and a half past cannot exist as the one free nation in a world enslaved. And in Socialist Britain we have the only other major nation which has shown itself capable of resisting the rising tide of totalitarianism. And, more than that, Britain under Attlee is the only major nation which gives promise of preserving democratic liberty as we know it and at the same time offering a solution to the social and economic problems which give totalitarianism its appeal to the common people all over the world.

Until the advent of the British Socialists to office in July, 1945, the triumphs of the international Communist movement had gone on practically unchecked since the middle of 1941. To a Europe which blamed the advent of fascism and war largely on the stubbornness and selfishness of those who were intent upon holding on to the economic status quo even to the extent of supporting fascism, there was an irresistible appeal in Communism's promises of social and economic change. And many people were convinced that the Communists were right when they claimed that "Western Democracy" was merely a cloak for economic exploitation, and that an end to unemployment, economic exploitation, and social discrimination was only attainable at the price of a ruthless dictatorship.

### *Freedom or Dictatorship?*

But the triumph of the British Labor Party presented to the world an alternative to Communism. The British Labor Government is committed to carrying out the necessary economic reforms while at the same time preserving and even strengthening the political democracy which does so much to set off this era in man's history from all those which have preceded it. If the British Government succeeds—can preserve full employment, rehouse the people, end the "depressed areas," end economic exploitation, and bring liberty to the colonial peoples of the British Empire—Communism with its concentration camps, secret police, and one-party dictatorships will have no moral justification whatsoever, and will have lost its appeal to all free peoples. It is this challenge which British Labor has flung to the totalitarian threat to throw out the baby with the bath, to end freedom with capitalism.

And the Communists, the world over, are aware of this challenge, if the average American is not. The onslaughts of Vishinsky in the UNO against British policy everywhere in the world is but

a symptom of the Communist reaction against the possibility of the success of the British Labor Government. In Britain itself, the bitterness of the attacks of the Communists on certain Labor leaders whom they consider most vulnerable—Ernest Bevin among them—is growing. The uniformly anti-British attitude of the Communist press throughout the world, attempts of the Communists from Stalin on down to bracket the Labor leaders and Churchill in one category—the growing frequency of Communist references to the British "Socialists" in quotation marks—all of these things indicate that the Communists will do all they can to make the British Labor experiment fail, and to discredit it, whether or not it fails. Because they know that success for British Labor will go far to mean failure for International Communism.

Therefore, it is to the interest of all those who are sincere believers in Democracy—as that word has been understood since the days of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln—that Britain's experiment in Social Democracy succeed.





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